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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Socio-Economic Problems of Aged Citizens in the Punjab: A Case Study of the Districts Faisalabad, Muzaffargarh and Layyah

Zahoor Ahmed<sup>1,\*</sup>, Muhammad Muzaffar<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Arshad Javaid<sup>3</sup> and Nida Fatima<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Government Islamia College, Faisalabad, Pakistan

<sup>2</sup>Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup>Sub Campus Attock, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan

<sup>4</sup>Department of Political Science, Baha-ud-Din Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

This study was designed to find out the socio economic problems faced by the aged people in Pakistan. The study was delimited to the three districts of the Punjab province. All the aged people above sixty years of age including male and female living in these three districts served as the target population of the study. A sample of 150 aged people was selected from the target districts by using purposive sampling technique. Fifty old age people including 25 male and 25 female were selected through this technique. The study was descriptive in nature and a household survey was conducted on the study sample. A checklist comprising 21 statements covering the social and economic problems confronting the aged people was developed. The validity and reliability of the tool was also sought. The collected data were analyzed by applying descriptive statistics like percentage. The results of the study showed that the old age citizens were facing a lot of social and economic problems owing to weak values system and the invasion of western culture. The provision of facilities addressing the economic as well as social problems of the aged people was recommended in this study.

### \*Corresponding Author:

zahoor707@gmail.com

### INTRODUCTION

In the ever changing world, everything is undergoing a change. World demographic scenario is witnessing a drastic change in population characteristics. The process of demographic transformation has been expedited and intensified due to the revolutionary discoveries and inventions in the field of medicine engineering. Biologically humans are prone to aging and the process of aging is the last stage of human life. Today world accommodates more aged people than ever. This has been made possible by reducing mortality rates and ultimately improving life expectancy rate. However this development has given rise to a multitude of socio economic problems related to aged people. Social values are as varied as are the societies. The industrial revolution, definitely brought new works and jobs, it also brought a rapid migration of the youth leaving the aged behind alone in their native homes. This situation of no work and no fellow left them helplessness and alienation. (Cowgill, 1972)

In some societies, aged people are considered a liability and in traditional societies like Pakistan aged people are highly respected and honored. But this traditional distinction regarding honoring the aged is vanishing under the changing social and economic milieu. Advancement in technology, ever changing production modes, transformation on economic roles has put the members of a society in new type of adaptation problems and a change in social roles and responsibilities. Change in technological and economic cultures has put the value system in a precarious condition. This situation has left aged people and senior citizens in a state of perplexity and uncertainty in every part of the world. According to UNO report the percentage of the aged people across the globe will mount up from 9.7% to 22.7 % in 2024 (Anonymous, 1996).

In Pakistan, as per analysis of Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education, population of aged people is 11.19 million out of which 5.69 million are male and 5.50 million are female. The ministry also

estimated that the same age group may reach to the new heights of 22.07 million comprising 11.09 million male and 10.98 million female in 2025 (Anonymous, 2013a). Pakistan is an Islamic country and the Muslims are the true followers of Islam, its values and culture. Most of the Pakistani people reside in rural areas and practice agriculture. As survey shows that about 70% people live in rural areas and the contribution of agriculture in the total GDP is above 21 percent. (Anonymous, 2013b). Respect of the aged people is considered the utmost Islamic value in the Muslim community and Holy Quran declares it an obligation to protect and pay due respect to the parents, particularly, when they touch the old age.

“And your Lord decreased that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, or shout at them but address them in term of honor”(Al Quran:17:23).

These injunctions are regarding the aged parents and in general. Here goes another verse with more clear ordain “And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy and say: My Lord, Bestow on them your mercy as they did bring me up when I was a little kid” (Al Quran: 17:24).

Holy Prophet (PBUH) said “one who does not treat our younger’s with affection and elders with respect, is not from us” this strong recommendation by the holy prophet to respect the elderly has strong effects on the followers of Islam. Pakistani community belongs to Islam and follows its injunctions. So traditionally, Pakistani society keeps elderly people in great esteem. However increasing interaction with western societies, influence of electronic media, campaign of international media, and increasing economic deterioration has weakened this trait of Pakistani society. Increasing inflation, claimed by officials even up to 20% and low income rates, and depressing economic conditions are responsible to negate the needs of senior citizens.

Pakistan is a developing country and is trying to strengthen its economy, so that it could improve the life style of its citizens. Growth in GDP is at the center of economic planning and implementation of policies. However in recent decade, the importance of Human Development has been recognized. Policies for the wellbeing of the humans are well under way. With the steady growth in human population different type of social and economic problems have emerged and are causing lot of damage to the social fabric of Pakistani society. Aged people are facing lot of social and economic problem in the changed social context.

In this context, Pakistani society has shifted from extended and joint family system towards nuclear family system. This shift has minimized the respect and honor of the aged parents and weakened the traditional family set up. This transformation has minimized the

authority of the aged on the family and resulted in neglect of their care and support. (Gulzar, 2008)

Keeping in view the increasing proportion of aged citizens becoming unproductive and dependent socially and economically on others, it becomes very important to study the causes of the socio economic problems faced by the senior citizens of the country. The recent rise in socio economic problems owing to the materialistic approach within the Pakistani community set new challenges to the government as well as the whole society to combat this situation as earlier as possible. In contrary to this, the condition of the aged people will go down and down resulting in the overall disorder in the whole society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main objective of the study was to determine the socio economic problems faced by the aged people in Pakistan. The target population of the study was aged people of above 60 years of age from three districts of the Punjab, Faisalabad, Muzaffargarh, and Layyah. 150 aged people were selected as a sample through purposive sampling, a non probability sampling technique. The study was delimited to three districts (one developed and two under developed) and fifty (50) aged persons (25 male and 25 female) were taken from each district. The main reason of selecting these three districts was to find out the variation and to increase the extent of the study on the basis of developed and under developed area of the Punjab. The tools of research were developed after a thorough review on the related literature and the expert opinions were sought to make certain its content and face validity. The checklist was comprised of 21 questions altogether covering the social as well as the economic areas. The social factor was comprised of two main sub factors “Source of income” with its five indicators business, pension, land/property, labor and dependent, and “fulfillment of different needs” with its four indicators food and clothing, entertainment and excursions, health care and the miscellaneous needs. This portion of the questionnaire was consisted on nine questions. Similarly, the social factor comprised two sub factors “Living style or nature” and “acknowledgements of different roles on behalf of the community”. In this portion, six questions were devised from the first sub factor and the same quantity was taken from the second sub factor. The reliability of the tool was determined after pilot testing on the 30 aged people ten from each district (5 male and five female) by the application of KR<sub>20</sub> method. Household survey was conducted by using a checklist in collaboration with the research assistants and through personal visits. Problems faced by aged people are varied and multiple one, but this study focused on the social and economic problems.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic data were collected from the study sample before assembling their respective social and economic problems. The information regarding the age and marital status of the desired sample was sought in order to better aware of the problems of the aged people of different age groups and marital status. This type of data is shown in the following figures:

Age group of the sample was ranging from 60 to 81 years and above. Representation of the all age groups was made mandatory in order to make the study valid and reliable. Major proportion of the respondents belonged to the first and second age group.

Figure 2 showed that 87% of the study sample (91% female and 84% male) was married, 12 percent (16% male and 8% female) widow/widower and only one female (0.66% of the total sample) was found single (Bachelor) in this study.

**Social issues**

This table showed that 10% of the study sample (1% female and 19% male) was living alone, 13% (24% female and 15 male) was living with spouse, 75% (77% male and 72% female) was living with their sons, one percent (1% male and 1% female) was living with the daughters, while the same proportion was living with the relatives like daughters and none of the study sample was living with their relatives instead of the above mentioned relations. It means that the people belonging to this age group are mostly dependent on their children and other relatives. Some cultural values in Pakistani community create hindrances in their living priorities and this is why most of the aged people dislike living with their beloved daughters despite their greatest will. This trend shows that Pakistani parents, especially belonging to rural communities take it a mark of shame to live with their married daughters. People would rather live alone instead of living with married daughters. Some people have their own personal lodging facilities, but the proportion of such people is only 10% of the total sample. In this factor maximum weight age was given to the joint family system which is the key indicator of socialization. Fifty percent value was given to living with sons, spouse and daughters”, 10% “living with spouse only”, 20% and 20% “living with sons and daughters” respectively, 5% “living with relatives” and no value was assigned to “living alone”. In this study the shows that the joint family system has reached its extreme of destruction. The results of this study favor the results of the study conducted by Ahmad (2011) on “the sufferings of the elderly people in Pakistan”.

This table showed that 65% of the respondents were aggrieved of the prevailing situation regarding the damages of the values system and the down fall of the teachings of Islam in the Muslim society. Perhaps, it is

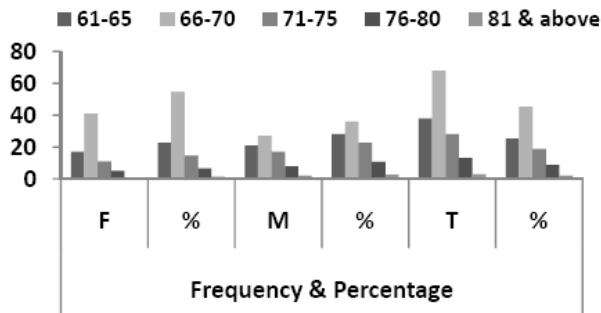


Fig. 1: Age groups of the Study sample

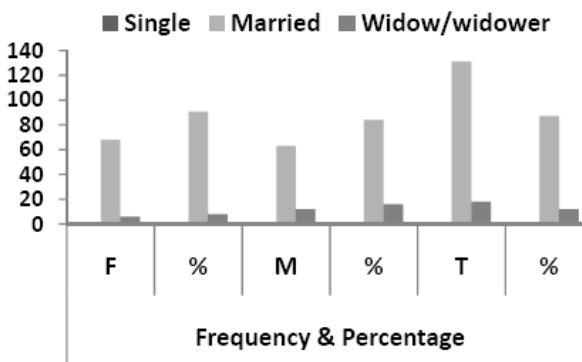


Fig. 2: Marital Status of old age citizens under study

because of the intervention of the western culture through electronic media and the invasion of the blind following of the western system of education. 88% of the respondents accept that the society is not ready to assign them any leadership role due to their age factor, the position of advisory role was found in a better position i.e. 65%, on other factors were found in a weak position by the society as responded by the study sample. They are expected to live an idle life away from the hustle and bustle of the leading roles. 72 % of the sample is unhappy for not being considered for decision making position. In critical and important family affairs, they are kept away and their opinion is not sought for, or is completely ignored. About 77% of the sample shows that, social responsibilities, which usually acknowledge the importance of any person, are averted. In this factor minimum 50% was fixed for the level of satisfaction regarding the acknowledgements of different roles by the aged people on the part of the community. Only on one role “advisory role” the acceptance role was rather better (65%) while on the other roles, the percentage of the respondents were below the satisfactory level (50%). It means that the society seems reluctant to gain benefit from them as an experienced and valuable members of the community. The results of this factor are parallel to the results of the studies conducted by Gulzar et al. (2008) and; Ahmad and Hafeez (2011) on “socio economic problems of

**Table 1: Data on living Styles of old age citizens under study**

Living with	Frequency & Percentage					
	F	%	M	%	T	%
Alone	01	1.33	14	18.66	15	10.00
Spouse	18	24.00	01	1.33	19	12.67
Sons	54	72.00	58	77.33	112	74.67
Daughters	01	1.33	01	1.33	02	1.33
Relatives	01	1.33	01	1.33	02	1.33
Joint family	00	00	00	00	00	00

**Table 2: Acknowledgements of different roles of aged people by community**

Roles of aged people acknowledged by the community	Frequency & Percentage			
	Yes	%	NO	%
Leadership Role	17	11.33	133	88.67
Advisory Role	98	65.33	52	34.67
Decision Making	42	28.00	108	72.00
Social Prestige/Status	67	44.67	83	55.33
Guidance and Counseling	53	35.33	97	64.67
Other Responsibilities	34	22.67	116	77.33
Total	52	34.67	98	65.33

**Table 3: Data on different sources of earning in old age citizens**

Source of earning	Frequency & Percentage					
	F	%	M	%	T	%
Business	01	1.33	12	16.00	13	8.67
Pension	03	4.00	08	10.66	11	7.33
Labor	02	2.66	07	9.35	09	6.00
Landlord/property	01	1.33	13	17.33	14	9.33
Dependent	68	90.68	35	46.66	103	68.67

**Table 4: Data on fulfillment of different needs of aged citizens**

Needs	Frequency & Percentage			
	Yes	%	NO	%
Food and Clothing	61	40.67	89	59.33
Entertainment and excursion	34	22.67	116	77.33
Health Care	73	48.67	77	51.33
Miscellaneous needs	67	44.67	83	55.33
Total	67	44.67	83	55.33

senior citizens and their adjustment in Punjab, Pakistan” and “factors affecting social participation of elderly people: a study in Lahore”.

### Economic problems

Source of earning mean the source of sustenance for the aged people that fall in the category of their economic issues. The table No 3 showed that 09% (16% male and 1% female) of the study sample was doing business, 07% (11% male and 4% female) rely on business, 06% (9% male and 3% female do labor, 9% are land lord and property owners while the remaining 69% (47% male and 91% female) of the sample is dependent on the others. This shows that a minute proportion of the sample is able to earn their livelihood. It shows that physically deteriorated aged people lacking the ability

to work anymore and it is crystal clear that a great number of the respondents are dependent on their children. This factor communicates the poor economic condition of the study sample. It is a fact that in Pakistani context most of the people, having crossed the age sixty, become financially dependent on their children. The people, who are government employees, are not an exception to it. Government employees on lower grades, get a very small amount as a pension. Keeping in view the inflation rates prevailing in the country, the pensions of the employees, posted on higher grades are also in sufficient to fulfill health care needs of the senior citizens.

This table showed that 40.67% of the study sample responded in “Yes” and 59.33 in “NO” about the availability of the sufficient food and clothing, 77% in “NO” and 23% in “Yes” about the fulfillment of their needs regarding entertainment and excursion, while 51% responded in “NO” and 49% in “Yes” regarding the availability of the health care facilities like the purchase of medicines and their proper and regular medical checkup and about the execution other needs, 455 of the respondents responded in “Yes” and 55% in “NO”. This shows that the different needs including the basic ones of the old age people are not properly met. Economy is at the center of social fabric of any community. Aging is not a social problem, but it is a problem due to non-productivity of the aged people. Socially, family members consider aged people a burden and a forced liability. The society, to which once, they were productive, has become careless and indifferent their different needs. Practically, no measures have been taken in this regard. With increasing age, mentally and physically, humans grow weak. The need for continuous care and treatment is at its highest at this age span. In this factor, the response level remained below the satisfactory level (50%) which shows the sample is facing a lot of difficulties to meet their basic needs. The results of the study on this factor are in line with the study conducted by Ahmad and Hafeez (2011) on “Older adults’ social support and its effects on their every day self maintenance” and “The suffering of elderly people in Pakistan”.

### Conclusions and recommendations

Research study shows that the problem of ageism, which has been haunting the western communities, is also being felt with an increasing intensity in the eastern Islamic communities. The society which once used to be proud of honoring its senior citizens has started feeling the aged people as a burden and just a forced liability. During the research study it was disclosed that due to the weakening of social values and social fabric, aged citizens of the community are suffering from a multitude of social and economic problems like uncaring and callous attitude by the near and dear ones and from the overall community. Some

of the aged persons despite having economic resources are dependent on the others due to their ill health and isolation. Most of the aged people in this study were found totally dependent on others in respect of economic needs. Such kinds of people are facing a lot of problems to meet their basic needs like food, clothing and health care. The blind following of the western cultures, values and the education system has created a disorder in the ethical and moral aspects of the young ones of the Islamic communities. It also created an indifferent attitude in the adolescents that keep them far away from the teachings of Islam sensing it the worn out and traditional system. The aged people face discrimination and are considered a burden on family. This study also showed that the community does not accept the different roles of the aged people that were understood in the Islamic milieu a symbol of majesty and dignity to take the guidance of the senior members of the society in different social activities. All these values and cultures have gone vanished from the eastern land. This leads the aged ones towards a sense of alienation and isolation. Their economic unproductively make them vulnerable to healthcare budgets and other recreational activities.

The problem of aging does not remain a social and economic problem but it also leads towards the breaking and weakening of social values. The problem of aging is becoming severe with the passage of time, and the community has to come up with plans and schemes to mitigate its quantity and intensity.

1. The Islamic community should pay due attention on the revival of its value system.
2. The electronic as well as print media should play positive role in the revival of Islamic culture and values.
3. The Government should give due representation to the aged people in different departments and sectors.
4. Old age benefit schemes and stipends should be introduced and fixed for the aged people on behalf of the government.
5. Old age villages should be set up where all the arrangements are made to meet their economic and social needs.

6. National research and training Centers should be set up for Older Citizens to best utilize the leisure hours of these citizens.

Contents on “paying due respect to the aged people” should be integrated in the curriculum at secondary level to better aware the young ones of the nation about the importance of aged people.

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